Genealogy and DNA

Average Percentage of Autosomal DNA Carried by Various Close Relations.
President’s Message
Greg Atkinson # 1766

Four years have passed since I accepted the role as Co-President of TIARA, first serving with Mary Choppa, and the past two years with Susan Steele. A new pair of co-presidents will be elected at the June meeting. I wish them both much success in all their endeavors and efforts leading TIARA as it carries out its all-volunteer, genealogical mission.

Technology in the guise of conference call capabilities has allowed me as a New Hampshire resident to serve as Co-President and remain as an avid and active volunteer in the planning and organization of two successful Celtic Connections Conferences. The third conference for August 2018 is in the works and more information about it will be forthcoming so keep eyes and ears peeled for updates about this exciting event. I will remain on the Celtic Connections Conference planning committee and will continue to support TIARA activities.

I want to sincerely thank all the TIARA members with whom I have worked and spent so many happy hours conference calling, e-mailing and meeting in person in a joint effort to assure the successful continuation of TIARA, its mission and purpose. These efforts have brought many of us closer to our Irish ancestors and closer to so many wonderfully like-minded Irish ancestor seekers. What fun it has been and what happiness, camaraderie and friendship there is yet to come for us all. Keep up the good work!
Ancestry Ups the Ante for DNA Providers
Mary Downey Coyne # 3777

If you have submitted your DNA to Ancestry in the past, now is the time to revisit your DNA results. The introduction of “genetic communities” by AncestryDNA has raised the bar for all other DNA providers, and is transforming genealogy by helping people pinpoint the geographical genetic origins of their families.

Take my husband’s family for example. We have always known that his cousin’s father was from County Galway and his mother was French Canadian. Now, thanks to “genetic communities” by AncestryDNA, we’ve been able to narrow down the location even further. This is a major breakthrough from his initial DNA profile, which was fairly generic showing 67% Irish, 14% Iberian Peninsula and 19% other regions. His Irish DNA is now specific to the “Connemara” region, rather than a general 67% Irish, and his French Canadian connection is precisely “French Settlers of Beauce, Quebec.”

What has happened? How did AncestryDNA manage to focus their results? In the weekly newsletter from the Center for Geographical Analysis at Harvard University, an article entitled “Clustering of 770,000 Genomes Reveals Post-Colonial Population Structure of North America” caught my attention and yielded a bonanza of information about what is happening at AncestryDNA.

This published article1, from AncestryDNA and three university research departments,2 explains the process whereby the new genetic communities were derived. The paper itself focuses on defining population structures in the US, Canada and Mexico based on the use of Ancestry DNA from 500 million individuals of US origin, along with information on their genetic connections extracted from 20 million genealogical records. The genetic connections are called ‘identity-by-descent’. The authors claim that their results “yield a detailed historical portrait of North America after European settlement.” The material in the article has been released in the public domain along with 126 pages of supplemental graphs and data. It is all fascinating, and those who love graphs and especially readers who are mathematically inclined, should scan the supplemental material. For the genealogy-focused readers, I will try to summarize the most interesting findings.

It is important to understand ‘identity-by-descent’ as opposed to identity by ethnic group. Identity-by-descent means that your DNA is coupled with a recent common ancestor as defined by your related family tree on Ancestry. However, you can have common pieces of DNA with totally unrelated individuals because you have a common ethnicity; that is, the pieces of DNA are similar for reasons other than ancestry. Two examples: 1) your mother’s niece and your father’s niece may share some DNA but they do not have the same ancestral lineage, and 2) a common DNA feature may be present due to adaptation and not heredity. The mathematics used in the genetic communities tries to tease apart which segments of your DNA are related to a common ancestor rather than a common ethnicity or the adaptation of a population to an environmental factor.

Initially, the researchers had to identify what they referred to as ‘clusters’. These were family groupings over several generations. Using computational methods, individuals with matching segments of DNA were grouped into clusters, since the DNA suggested a genetic relationship among these individuals. These clusters were then matched to user-generated pedigrees by location, which revealed patterns of migration and settlement. As many of you know, the amount of shared DNA after 3-4


2 Department of Computational Medicine and Bioinformatics, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI; Department of Computational Biology, School of Computer Science, Carnegie Mellon University, Pittsburgh, PA; W.E.B. DuBois Research Institute, Hutchins Center for African and African American Research, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass
generations declines significantly. However, because of the size of the sample, significant information could be gleaned from the data. Subpopulations with only about 100 individuals were eliminated so that the major clusters are based on larger samples of up to 10,000 individuals. While the DNA samples pinpointed present-day individuals at certain geographic locations, the submitted pedigrees of these individuals gave birth dates and locations of their ancestors.

The largest groupings of immigrant clusters were the Finish, Scandinavian, Jewish, and Irish who immigrated in large numbers within the past 150-200 years, as well as African-Americans. Data is somewhat skewed since AncestryDNA tests are more accurate for individuals of European ancestry. While those individuals who claimed to be Irish did have birth locations in Ireland, those who were designated as Scandinavians were mostly Norwegians. Atlantic Canadians (Acadians), who were deported to the American colonies by the British in the mid-1700s, migrated to Louisiana after the Seven Years War ended. More than a century later, significant numbers of French-Canadians, located around Quebec, migrated to New England.

The color-coded maps of the United States and northeastern Canada in Figure 1 show the birth locations associated with each cluster of DNA-related individuals, based on locations defined in their multigenerational pedigrees. Beneath the label for each designated cluster, the second line indicates the generations represented by that cluster. Zero (0) generation is the present-day individual who supplied the DNA sample. Generation 1 is the parents of that person, generation 2 is the grandparents, etc. This indicates the time frame for the data. The third line shows the number of individuals in the sample, (i.e. n = number of samples). The size of the dots is proportional to the number of samples in that location.

In these maps, the great-grandparents and earlier generations (generations 3-9) of a large cluster of Irish immigrants were located in Nova Scotia, Newfoundland and New Brunswick. More detailed maps of Irish migration are shown in the supplemental material and are discussed below. It is obvious that the Atlantic coastal cities were the major landing points for most immigrant populations and over time, they migrated mainly to the west. A more detailed analysis of the data supports this migration pattern and demonstrates very little migration from north to south. Some European groups such as the Scandinavians and Finnish settled predominantly in the north central US. An interesting observation is that the large cluster of migrants in Utah is of similar parentage to that in the northeastern part of the US. The Acadians are found in both Nova Scotia and Louisiana.

Since we are The Irish Ancestral Research Association, I pulled the Irish data out of the supplementary files for review. Figure 2 shows the pattern of migration of Irish from Ireland to Europe. The size of the dots is independently scaled by the number of pedigree annotations. The color indicates the ‘odds ratio’. Locations with a high ‘odds ratio’ are more highly concentrated with individuals from one birth location. For example, the cluster of Irish in Chicago (red dot signifying an ‘odds ratio’ of greater than 10) are from similar birth locations. The clusters around Boston are light blue (signifying an ‘odds ratio’ smaller than 1) indicating that this Irish population is from many diverse locations.

While we may think of Irish migration principally to the US, Canada and Australia, there was significant movement to the UK, especially Liverpool and Glasgow areas, and mainland Europe (dark blue and red dots). Figure 2 also demonstrates the pattern of Irish migration to the US. The greater Boston area has a large proportion of present-day Irish but they are spread over a large area in Massachusetts and along the eastern seaboard (diameter of dots). The light blue color of the same dots represents the diverse areas of their Irish origins (0.1-2 odds ratio). New York City and Philadelphia have concentrated populations of Irish descendants from a more limited number of locations in Ireland as evidenced by the diameter and color of the dots.
Figure 1 Ancestral birth locations in North America associated with ‘identity by descent’ clusters. Points show pedigree birth locations assigned to each cluster. Only birth locations within indicated generations are plotted. For each cluster, points are independently scaled by the number of pedigree annotations. These data are in the public domain on Creative Commons CCO and can be viewed in color at https://www.nature.com/articles/ncomms14238/figures/3
Figure 2. Irish Migration. Ancestral birth locations worldwide, in both North America and in Europe for each cluster detected by ‘identity-by-descent.’

For each cluster, points are independently scaled by the number of pedigree annotations. A high ‘odds ratio’ indicates a greater concentration of individuals from the same location in Ireland. A location is plotted only if at least 10 ancestors are linked to the cluster sample. These data are in the public domain on Creative Commons CCO and can be viewed in color at https://www.nature.com/article-assets/npg/ncomms/2017/170207/ncomms14238/extension/ncomms14238-s1.pdf
(dark blue – odds ratio 2-5). Chicago and Ireland are red dots indicating a highly-enriched population of Irish from the same location (>10 odds ratio).

This paper is a comprehensive and highly mathematical analysis of the DNA data coupled with associated family pedigrees. For the most part the trends represented in the maps seem to make sense, but we all know how many pedigrees we have found in Ancestry that are incorrect. In the blog associated with Ancestry DNA, people are beginning to respond with their concerns about some of the data. Most of it relates to refinements of ethnic groups but the accuracy will improve as more DNA samples are submitted and the data population increases. For example, there was a discussion about the distinction among Creoles Cajuns and Acadians in Louisiana. Other individuals clarified the differences in migration of different Jewish ethnicities which were all clumped together under European Jewish. We need to remember this is a first approximation and only works because there is a massive amount of data for several large population groups. In addition, at this time, the DNA testing procedure is more selective for people of European descent but this will change. These maps are also the result of several mathematical manipulations which include subjective decisions on process. However, despite these caveats, I am impressed by how robust the data are and look forward to further refinements as more DNA and pedigrees are collected. For more discussions go to https://blogs.ancestry.com/ancestry/2017/03/28/genetic-communities-beta-new-innovation-from-ancestrydna/


Solving a Galway Mystery with DNA
Judy Francesconi #3151

My great-grandfather John Mannion came from County Galway in 1865. He purchased 100 acres of farmland in 1876 in Littleton, MA and the location off Route 2A is now marked

John Mannion (c.1844-1917)

with a street named Mannion Place. My father said that his grandfather sold the farm when Route 2A was widened. That was about all I knew about my great-grandfather. I never met my grandfather who died in 1936 and we were not close with any other members of the family.

When I started researching, we did not yet have the resources of the internet. I took a class at the Littleton Library where I learned about census records, how to get to NARA, etc. At the end of that class, I looked around and realized that the town records would have some information on the family. I diligently went through the records. I found dog licenses, amounts of acreage, number of cattle on the land, etc.

Later, when the internet was available, I met a cousin through Rootsweb. We found death, birth and marriage records and pictures but I never was able to find out where the
Mannions had come from in Galway. There are many John Mannions in Galway; this fact did not make my research easy.

In 2015, I went to Dublin with TIARA. I had progressed in my research and I was able to find information on all my other great grandparents who had also come from Ireland, but the Mannions remained a mystery. No amount of microfilm or other research records yielded definitive results.

After that trip, in August of 2015, I had a DNA match for a cousin in Australia on Ancestry. John Meara came up as a second/third cousin. Although his great-grandmother and my great-grandfather were half siblings, we have the closest match of any of my cousin matches through autosomal DNA. He told me that his uncle had been actively searching for the branch of the Mannion family that had gone to the States. His uncle had even hired a researcher from the Hibernian Society in Dublin in 1985 but they had no luck. However, we were able to put the story of all the children together based on his uncle’s notes, his research of the family in Australia and my research here.

Through this DNA contact, I now know where they came from in Galway: the townland of Gloves South in the Athenry area. Through their records, I also learned much more.

My great-great-grandfather, also named John Mannion, was married three times. His first wife was Honoria Kennedy who died about 1858. They had five children. I believe my great grandfather was the oldest, born about 1844 and his sister Delia, the youngest, about 1858.

After Honoria’s death, John married Margaret Mogan and they had two children, Michael, born in 1860 and Margaret, born in 1865. His wife Margaret died in 1867 and he married Bridget Howard in 1868. This couple had at least four children; the youngest were twins, born in 1875. The parish records for Athenry do not exist prior to 1858, but there are records for these later births and the second and third marriages in Kiltullagh Parish.

At least three of the children of his first marriage immigrated to Massachusetts and settled in the Acton/Littleton area. John, my great-grandfather, came first, followed by Thomas in 1869 and Delia in 1873. The children of his second marriage also left Ireland. Michael went to Australia in 1880. He worked in the gold fields at Gympie and sent for his sister Margaret in 1882. She is the great-grandmother of my cousin and DNA match, John Meara.

In 1883, my great-great-grandfather, his wife Bridget and their four children went to Australia. They left on September 14, 1883 and arrived in Brisbane on December 28, 1883. John was ill on the voyage and was taken to a hospital in Brisbane where he died 10 days later. His death certificate noted his birthplace as Athenry.

Without the DNA connection, I would never have been able to piece together this story or even imagine that I had any cousins in Australia. My cousin John has located the unmarked grave in Too-wong Cemetery in Brisbane. We are going to put up a plaque on the wall beside the unmarked graves in memory of John Mannion, who late in life was brave enough to relocate his family so far away, but was never able to see his new land.
Why DNA?

I asked the question “Why DNA?” The answer is “yDNA,” Pardon the bad pun; but that IS the answer. We can use the male yDNA to trace our heritage.

We inherit our DNA equally from our parents. X and Y-chromosomes are part of our DNA. A woman’s DNA has two X-chromosomes and a man has one X chromosome and one Y chromosome in his DNA. For males, the X chromosome comes from the mother, and the Y chromosome comes from the father. Females have one X chromosome each from the father and the mother.

Y-chromosomes remain relatively unchanged for as many as 500 generations. The Y-chromosome of a present-day man is essentially the same as that of his remote male ancestor. However, random elements may exhibit changes or mutations. If parts of the DNA that don’t have vital effects mutate, the person passes the mutation along to future generations. That’s how we trace a man’s male ancestry - by analyzing elements of the Y chromosome of his DNA.

By joining TIARA, you expressed an interest in your Irish heritage. Some of us have pursued this interest through genealogical research. Quite often, we encounter “brick walls,” usually because of lack of records. DNA can help break through these walls, giving evidence of ancestors’ origins.

DNA, while not a substitute for conventional genealogical research, does enhance it. It may:

1. Further your research by identifying your ancestors’ origins.
2. Put you in contact with others who have some identical DNA and may have been more successful in building the bridge to your ancestors.
3. Provide some surprises – for instance, some Gordon DNA tests match that of members of the Douglas family. These are termed “non-paternity events” meaning the father is unknown. One of the following may have occurred:
   - A Douglas married a Gordon heiress and agreed to change his surname so she could inherit under Scottish law;
   - An orphan was adopted or raised as a Gordon;
   - An unmarried Gordon woman had a son fathered by a Douglas male and the child was raised as her younger brother.

Genetic genealogy projects that use DNA tests to trace male lineages are known as Surname DNA projects. Because the Y chromosome is passed from father to son with a predictable rate of mutation and since many cultures pass surnames down from father to son, people with the same surname can use genealogical DNA testing to determine if they share a genealogical common ancestor. Surname DNA Projects began in the late 1990s and grew slowly. The pace has picked up considerably in recent times. There are now close to ten thousand projects; the estimated number of participants is over one million.

Family Tree DNA (FTDNA) is one of the companies that interprets the results in conjunction with the laboratory at the University of Arizona. There are five levels of test results: 12, 25, 37, 67 and 111 markers. Markers are specific sections of DNA that can contain known mutations. By testing more markers, it is possible to narrow down the likely relationships to others. These levels can be understood by comparing them to a tree:

1. Twelve markers can be alluded to as the main trunk of the tree. Testing to 12 markers will confirm that you are indeed a member of that particular surname group.
2. Twenty-five markers. This is the branch of the tree. This places you in a major subdivision of your surname group.
3. Thirty-seven markers. This is the twig of the branch. Testing to 37 markers, which is recommended, will show the particular family of your ancestors. It will also more closely identify your relationship with others whose results closely match yours.
4. Sixty-seven markers. This is the leaf on the twig. It will further define the number of generations that have elapsed since you and others on your branch shared a common ancestor. It will also further define your background.
5. The 111-marker test takes you to a vein in the leaf. It refines the origins identified by the lower level test.

You may be saying, “This sounds like the real thing and I’m ready to take the leap into DNA testing.” You can visit the Family Tree DNA web site ftdna.com and click on DNA Tests. Then click on the test you wish to order (in this case Y-DNA) and follow the instructions for ordering a DNA test kit. DNA test kits can also be obtained directly through Surname DNA projects. FTDNA offers a discount on test kits ordered through a Surname DNA Project.

When you apply to a Surname DNA Project, or simply have your DNA analyzed, you will receive a packet with two sterile swabs in sterile containers. Following the instructions in the kit, rub two areas, one with each swab, on the inside of your cheek, put each swab in its respective container and mail them in the return-addressed envelope to the laboratory. In about six to eight weeks, you will receive your results online through your myFTDNA account.

I have talked about Y-DNA testing for males. Women can also trace their male line through their father. The key yDNA can be obtained from a father, brother, male cousin, nephew, etc. One of these people would test their yDNA. You not only uncover your heritage, but so does your male relative. In fact, one could track any related surname line by finding a male relative in that line and then testing their yDNA.

People can also have their mitochondrial DNA (mtDNA) tested. Mothers pass their mtDNA to all of their children, male and female. The mtDNA follows the female side of the family. Thus you inherited your mtDNA from your mother who inherited it from her mother, and so on, to your most remote female ancestor. The further back in time you go, mtDNA will maintain its genetic pattern, and yDNA will show some more changes. The value of yDNA is it can show generational branches going back several hundred years. The value of mtDNA is that it reveals deep branches going back thousands of years (before the adoption of surnames).

In addition to mtDNA testing, FTDNA offers the Family Finder test which analyzes autosomal DNA (atDNA), that is found in all the chromosomes. This test is similar to those done by Ancestry and 23 and Me, although all these organizations have differences in their tests. We have 48 chromosomes, half inherited from our father and half from our mother. As we inherit chromosomes from our parents, so they inherited chromosomes from their parents and so on, back into history. We as well as our siblings and cousins all have some of our ancestors’ DNA.

The Family Finder Test analyzes selected sections of atDNA in the chromosomes and compares them to the same selected sections of other people’s atDNA. The results are measured in lengths called centiMorgans (cM). The longer the strands of cMs shared by two individuals the closer they are related. By ordering this Family Finder Test, you could find cousins out there who have also tested with FTDNA (or other organizations). The results can identify cousins usually in the range of 4th to 6th cousins. Ancestry DNA and 23 and Me also offer atDNA testing, but not Y- or mtDNA testing. FTDNA uses your original saliva sample to conduct any of the tests that they offer.

While there are many surname DNA Projects sponsored by FTDNA, they also offer Geographic Projects for Y-, mt- and dual Y-/mtDNA plus mtDNA Lineage Projects. For an explanation of these projects, click on Projects on the FTDNA homepage. This will bring you to the five categories of FTDNA projects. Then for example, under the yDNA Geographical Projects, clicking on the letter ‘I’ will list the ten projects to date in that category whose title begins with that letter. Included in this list are the four current (2017) Irish yDNA projects: Ireland (surname), Irish Caribbean, Irish Mapping, and Irish Midlands. Selecting one of these subcategories will give details of the project. Among the information that might be included are number of participants, common haplogroup(s) for the project, genetic statistics, and contact information. More comprehensive information, including possible family matches to your own DNA, may be investigated by joining the specific surname project.
**Muintervara to Bandon**  
**A Migration Path in yDNA**  
Marie Daly #0001

For people of Irish descent, including natives of Ireland, Y-DNA testing offers important clues for tracing the paternal histories of clans. Identifying the DNA of Irish natives whose origins came from historic clan territories can help other people of the same surname locate the origins of their ancestors. In the case of the Daly clan, Y-DNA tests revealed a possible migratory pattern from the Muintervara peninsula to Bandon, County Cork. It was my own family who enabled this discovery.

I was pretty sure that my Daly ancestors came from Bandon, County Cork. My great-grandfather, Matthew Daly, immigrated to Belmont, Massachusetts in 1851, along with his widowed mother, brothers and sister. His naturalization petition indicated that he had been born on March 15, 1834 in Bandon, County Cork. The Bandon parish register confirmed this birth, as well as the births of his siblings, and the marriage of his parents.

The administrator of the Daly surname group had embarked on a mission to collect yDNA from various locations in Ireland where the name Daly was most common. He saw on the TIARA surname interest list that my Daly family originated in Bandon, and contacted me. I convinced my brother to send in a DNA sample to Family Tree DNA. No one really expected that he would closely match anyone in the Daly surname group. To our surprise, he was a perfect match with a man in Ireland who lived in Kilcrohane, County Cork. Kilcrohane was the ancestral homeland of the Dalys of County Cork. The Bandon parish register confirmed this birth, as well as the births of his siblings, and the marriage of his parents.

Bandon is 78 miles from Kilcrohane. Furthermore, the man with whom my brother matched lived even farther out on the narrow peninsula. So how could this be? Muintervara is a very narrow, mountainous peninsula in which the terrain drops off sharply from the road. The steep terrain could not accommodate the burgeoning population of the late 18th century. At the same time, textile industries were expanding in towns like Bandon. So the children of Muintervara farmers migrated to Bandon to work in these textile mills and other industries. While historians may have theorized about internal Irish migration, the DNA of my Daly family results provided conclusive evidence of this particular migratory pattern.

**What’s In It For Me?**  
Mary Downey Coyne #3777

When I decided to send in a sample for DNA, I really didn’t have a good reason other than curiosity. I was sure of my ethnic background, but it seemed the thing to do. So in early 2016, I spit in a tube and sent my sample off to Ancestry. Within a month, my results popped up in my Ancestry account. Many people just want to see their ethnicity but mine turned out as I expected, 66% Irish, 25% Western Europe, 6% Great Britain with a touch of Finland/Northwest Russia and Iberian Peninsula. My real curiosity focused on whom I would match.

At first there were no close matches other than 4th-6th cousins which was somewhat disappointing. I chose to contact one who was a “4th cousin” under the pseudonym “maryask” since her ethnicity seemed to be close to mine. She responded quickly and her Irish great grandparent, Michael Brown (Browne) was from County Wexford as was my mother. He had immigrated to Canada and had married there before moving to Ohio. I inquired whether she knew of a townland but of course, she didn’t. I went to Griffith’s and found that there were many Browns in Mulrankin Parish where my great grandfather was born and Brownes in Bannow, in the very
townland where my mother and her forebears were born. There were no Michaels.

This was an exciting beginning but it ended there since I didn’t think the time spent would provide me with any new insights. In retrospect, now that I understand DNA a little better, my chances of success were very low from the beginning. Unfortunately, unlike with other DNA providers, such as Family Tree DNA and 23andMe, there is no way to assess the quantity of matching DNA material. Is it a lot of little pieces along multiple chromosomes or large chunks on one or two chromosomes? This makes a big difference in your confidence of a significant match, the latter being more significant.

A few months later, a new match appeared with a better confidence level – 3rd-4th cousin. Not great, but getting closer. This person was “fatherdon” (name changed for confidentiality) and he had a surname in his tree that I recognized – Moriarty (name changed). In addition, I recognized the individual people and felt sure that his great grandfather was a brother to my great grandmother. I sent a message listing my proposed family connection as well as the townlands connected to the individuals. He replied in the affirmative and said that he had visited there and stayed on the farm in Blackhall. On my initial visit to Ireland my aunt had taken me for a visit to the Moriarty cousins down the road in Blackhall. I emailed my first cousin in Ireland, who grew up in the area, and she confirmed that a son from one of the earlier generations of Moriartys had left for America.

The pseudonym, fatherdon, intrigued me so I decided to google this person by his real name and found more than I had expected. He had been a priest but was now married. He was associated with a group of priests of similar persuasion who performed weddings for mixed religious couples, lapsed Catholics, divorced Catholics and same sex couples. I also found him presently as a pastor for a Protestant congregation.

The most surprising finding was a newspaper article about his new wife, who at the age of 53, after menopause, had a set of twins. According to the article she had been married before and had three older children, but now, thanks to new technology, i.e. a donor egg and my cousin’s sperm, she was now the mother of twin boys. The twins also have a two-year old sibling. In the newspaper article the new mother of twins exclaimed that she looks forward to spending her golden years taking care of teenagers.

A few months later, I discovered an option in Ancestry in the DNA section. I called up my DNA matches and selected fatherdon. The page opened to his set of data. I noted a menu choice labeled “Shared Matches”. By clicking on this button, the program called up other DNA samples that supposedly matched both my DNA and my cousin’s DNA. A DNA person called hotjava came up as a match – not a very strong match but interesting. Unfortunately, there was no family tree associated with this DNA. I contacted the person and found that she had been adopted, so she had no tree to post, but was looking to find out what she could.

She was quite willing to share information. Hotjava was born in Washington, D.C. and her mother had stayed in a Catholic home for unwed mothers. She knew that her biological parents were teenagers and knew the name of the home where her mother had stayed. She did not know more than that. Since she matched both myself and my Moriarty descendant cousin, I assumed that she must be of Irish descent and most likely related to a Moriarty. In looking through the family tree of the Moriartys who had immigrated to the U.S., I found that they had settled in Maryland. This was encouraging since Maryland is very close to Washington D.C. I contacted my cousin, described above, but he had no knowledge of any children in the family being put up for adoption. Of course, he wouldn’t know; nobody talked about these things.

I convinced hotjava to put her DNA on GED-match hoping we would have a better chance of finding a match but that has not been successful so far. She did send a second sample to 23andMe for analysis and this pulled up a match for a second cousin. She tried to contact this person but did not get any response.
She provided me with the information she had obtained which was a name and a photo from the match. I googled the name and came up with some related information. This supposed second cousin seemed to be a middle-aged man and had a varied background. He had a rather standard business job but, on the side, he was a Russian Orthodox priest. I have tried searching for him through various avenues but have not had much success. It is difficult because I don’t have a 23andMe account and can’t access her information. I hate to end the story by leaving the reader hanging but we are still working on this trail. However, it does demonstrate that one DNA with a single provider only selects a fixed population and that you need to have your DNA in several databases for the best chance of connecting to unknown relatives.

As a result of writing this article, I went back to my AncestryDNA and found that Ancestry had modified their ethnicity profile to produce “genetic communities”. [See author’s article on page 23. – Ed.] The communities have been established by using a combination of DNA matches along with locations in the associated family trees. Each “genetic community” is mapped to more circumscribed areas on a country map. In my case, my original ethnicity percentage remained the same but now part of my DNA makeup mapped across southern Ireland and another percentage was weakly associated with northeastern Ireland. This makes sense because my DNA should contain heritage from Limerick/Wexford (Southern Ireland Community, and Meath (Ulster Irish Community).

In my AncestryDNA account, I also have a sample from a relative whose father is from Galway and his mother is French Canadian. One of his “genetic communities” is solely from the Connemara region in Ireland and the other is around the southern end of the St Lawrence Seaway in Quebec. Each group is well defined and in localized areas. In addition, there are related histories attached to each genetic community. For individuals who are only interested in their ethnicity, this new presentation is just the type of information they seek. With further refinement and additional contributions to the database, I can see how these groupings can be a significant tool for zeroing in on potential locations when other genealogical information is limited.

Since the personal discovery of “genetic communities” in AncestryDNA, the story of hot-java, my supposed cousin who was adopted has changed, and points out the error of
jumping to conclusions. As mentioned above, it appeared that hotjava, fatherdon, and I are related by DNA. Of course, that means that we are all from the same part of Ireland. Not so. As I explored genetic communities, it seems that hotjava connects to the Irish in North Connacht. I have no connection with the Connacht area. Her strongest genealogical line is Settlers of South Pennsylvania and Central Maryland.

What happened? In reading the blogs associated with AncestryDNA's genetic communities, I found that many people have not been connected to the area of Ireland they expected based on their ancestral lineage. I tried to assess hotjava’s relationship by looking at our chromosomes. As mentioned above, hotjava downloaded her raw DNA from AncestryDNA and uploaded it to GEDmatch. GEDmatch is a large database to which people can upload their raw DNA for free. The value of this software is that you can obtain a picture of your actual chromosome matches, and an estimate of the strength of your DNA match.

Both hotjava and I shared one 20.6 centimorgan (estimate of length) stretch of DNA on a single chromosome out of 23 chromosomes. A significant finding but not a very strong relationship. My conclusion is that hotjava has other pieces of “Irish” DNA that may have a closer relationship to the Connacht region of Ireland rather than southern Ireland. While the new “genetic communities” has confirmed my family’s ancestral heritage, this may not be the case for everyone and should prompt a new look at the strength and validity of any DNA match as well as the accuracy of the ancestral tree.

In summary, I have had a lot of fun with my DNA matches. I found one unknown cousin, with an unusual life, plus I am on a mission to find a biological parent for a newfound friend. I also learned that DNA matches need to be evaluated critically and tested from several points of view. However, it seems that DNA is becoming a more powerful genealogical tool as new data and technology are added to the mix. Who knows what will turn up next?

The Maine Gaeltacht DNA Project

How one individual’s enthusiasm for family history evolved into a successful DNA project.

Deb Gellerson

One can feel the excitement as soon as visitors enter the Maine Irish Heritage Center (MIHC) Library on any of our weekly Friday Family Research Days. Curious individuals and groups, often armed with family genealogies, ascend the steep steps from the lower level of our historic building to enter the Library. Once part of the original church, this area became the sacristy of the new church when St Dominic’s was rebuilt in 1892. As Portland, Maine’s first Catholic Church, Saint Dominic’s likely was one of the first stops for the weary Irish immigrants arriving at their city of hope, having escaped famine and poverty in their native land.

The Maine Gaeltacht DNA Project was conceived by one individual, Margaret Feeny LaCombe of Portland. She began researching her family roots as a young woman. Margaret’s interest in history sparked her fascination with the large numbers of Irish that had settled in the area and she took a keen interest not only in her own family but also in all the families that settled in the area. After many years of research, she had amassed a huge database of Irish families - well over 130,000 names. An avid reader and researcher, Margaret learned about DNA and eagerly became one of the first participants in DNA testing. This would become a critical stepping-stone to help with her years of research in making family connections for herself and others. This interest in the history of the families led her – and other family historians - to develop her idea into the Maine Gaeltacht Project.

The Maine Irish Heritage Center uses Family Tree DNA to host our project, which currently has 902 members. The requirements of the Maine Gaeltacht DNA Project are that the participant have a connection with both Maine and Ireland and that each participant submit a family tree to MIHC. While we have focused on the Galway Irish, we welcome anyone who has a connection with Maine and Irish roots.
to join our project and most importantly submit family genealogies to MIHC.

So many people ask us “what can DNA testing and the MIHC database do for me and how can it assist me with my research?” While our database is not available for open public browsing due to confidentiality of living people, the team of researchers has been able to use the research to guide people and direct them in their quest. Hundreds of people seeking family research assistance have left our center filled with emotion after learning names, dates and places of their ancestors. Our work has been critical in assisting adoptees in finding their birth families.

When MIHC volunteers began to receive DNA testing results that we had done in regions of Galway, specifically Connemara and the Carna areas, we could easily assume the expected; that the people who were living in the mountains of Connemara and the people in the coastal Carna area were closely related by DNA. As these mountain people were forced to leave their homes they moved out to the coastal areas as a means of survival. Thus the family lines were extended from the mountains to the coast. Many of our members in our project who have a documented connection to the mountains of Connemara have come to learn that they have 2-4th cousins in the Carna area. Although records in these areas are sparse, DNA testing is helping us as we work to group people together within our project. We have an exciting partnership between the Carna Emigrants Centre in Carna and the Maine Irish Gaeltacht Project and we work collaboratively in our genealogy research and DNA testing.

Our project is unique in that we can combine our DNA results along with our massive database of family histories that have been shared with us. We have collected many of these DNA samples ourselves, on foot, sometimes with a strategic purpose and other times simply by meeting someone in a quaint Connemara village pub who says they had aunts who moved to Portland a couple of generations ago. And perhaps with little nudging, they gladly test to help us to reconnect the roots and repair the missing pieces of family links that have been severed by famine and hard times.

We cherish our family historians and genealogists within Ireland who are assisting us in building the pieces to our puzzle, and lending a hand with DNA testing and local research. All of us who are so passionate about our genealogy know that this research is something that we do because it feels right to try to discover where your roots originate and what your ancestors had to endure to emigrate, or perhaps to stay right there on Irish soil and struggle through the tough times. They did whatever they could do to make a life for their families; the mystery of the how and why have become part of who we are. We celebrate their strengths and accomplishments, when discovered, in our hearts.

The Genealogy and DNA project team members at the Maine Irish Heritage Center donate their time as a means to help others and, just as importantly, as a way to create income for the center and its Genealogy Department. The volunteers here fund their own testing and volunteer their time. We do have a fee for our research service with the monies going to MIHC and the Project. We encourage people to become members of the MIHC whose shoe-string budget is based upon grants and donations. MIHC is the heart of the Irish community here in Southern Maine and we try to do our part to encourage others to help in preserving its heritage.

We are often asked “How can I start a project such as this?” Our suggestions include the following:

- Decide on your common theme. For the Maine Gaeltacht DNA Project it is Galway and the Portland Irish.
- Start accumulating a database of names, places and dates.
- Ask others in your community or group to share their family histories. Over time, your database will grow in names and popularity. You will begin to find commonalities in family trees and can suggest to others directions for their research.
- It is very important as you work with others to keep any living person’s information totally confidential.
- Encourage people to DNA test and you will soon begin to find connections among your group members.
We encourage you to DNA test to begin the discovery of your heritage! Further, if you find you have Maine and Ireland connections, consider joining the MIHC’s Maine Gaeltacht DNA project. We would welcome your family tree information for our project database as we work to grow our project and continue to be of assistance to individuals seeking to connect with their homeland. For further information, contact MIHC at irishhc@maine.rr.com.

Deb Gellerson is a Maine Irish Heritage Center volunteer.

**Suggestions for Summer**

Marie Ahearn #0097

Planning your summer genealogy calendar? Why not include a visit to an Irish-themed exhibition in your area or wherever your research trips take you. Here are a few suggestions for the New England area.

**The Irish Atlantic**, at the Massachusetts Historical Society until September 22, 2017, traces the presence of the Irish in Boston from the early 18th century through the beginning of the 20th century. Exhibition hours are from 10:00AM - 4:00 PM Monday through Saturday at 1154 Boylston St., Boston

For additional information on the exhibition, including video and chronology visit [https://www.masshist.org/irish-atlantic](https://www.masshist.org/irish-atlantic)

The New Bedford Whaling Museum is hosting **Famine, Friends & Fenians** at their Johnny Cake Hill location until September 2017. The exhibition traces New Bedford’s “curious role in Irish history” through three centuries including the rescue of Irish militants from Perth Australia by the New Bedford whaling ship, Catalpa.

The museum is open daily from 9:00 AM – 5:00 PM. More information is available: [https://www.whalingmuseum.org/explore/exhibitions/famine-friends-fenians/](https://www.whalingmuseum.org/explore/exhibitions/famine-friends-fenians/)

"**Fleeing Famine: Irish Immigration to North America, 1845-1860**" exhibit at the Knights of Columbus Museum until September 17, 2017 focuses on the Irish famine emigrants’ experience and the "coffin ships" that transported them. Maritime paintings depict real vessels that carried these refugees to America and Canada. Some paintings illustrate actual incidents that occurred during specific voyages. Bronze sculptures on loan from Ireland’s Great Hunger Museum present artistic interpretation of the horrors and hardships the emigrating Irish faced on these journeys. Open daily from 10AM-5PM, the museum located at One State Street, New Haven, Connecticut offers free parking and free admission. For additional information visit: [http://ighm.org/current-exhibitions/](http://ighm.org/current-exhibitions/)

**Ireland’s Great Hunger Museum** at Quinnipiac University in Hamden, CT uses art to explore the Irish famine. The museum’s acquisitions form the world’s largest collection of Great Hunger-related art and educational resources. Currently on display is an exhibit that tells the story of Elihu Burritt (1810-79), who brought knowledge of Ireland’s Great Hunger to the American people. Highlights from the museum’s permanent collection comprise a second exhibit. A major portion of the museum’s art will be traveling to Ireland in 2018 for exhibitions at Dublin castle and Skibbereen. The museum, located at 1132 Whitney Ave in Hamden, is open Wednesday through Sunday. See the museum’s website: [http://ighm.org/current-exhibitions/](http://ighm.org/current-exhibitions/)

**Next Issue**

While researching our ancestors, we often need to search beyond the traditional genealogical sources of census and vital records. Children’s school, legal, medical, and welfare records are some examples that may contain information not found elsewhere. What ‘records of children’ have you investigated? Have they given you clues to lead you further along in your research or perhaps given some new insight to a family’s circumstances? Share your research story and write an article for the next issue of the TIARA Newsletter. Articles on other topics of family research are always welcome.

Please send all submissions to newsletter@tiara.ie. Submissions for the Fall Issue are requested by July 25, 2017.
Website Updates
Virginia Wright # 2480

Reclaim the Records, is a not-for-profit group that uses Freedom of Information laws and Open Data initiatives to procure public copies of historically or genealogically important public records that have limited or no public access. With the goal to get these records put online with free access for everyone, the organization started a pilot project in 2015. They made a request to NYC Municipal Archives to obtain a copy of the City Clerk’s Index to the 1908-1929 Application, Affidavit, and License for a Marriage data set. The agency continued to withhold the requested information until Reclaim the Records filed a legal petition with the New York Supreme Court. After winning the release of that data, Reclaim the Records proceeded with six more requests to the states of New York, New Jersey and Missouri for copies of indexes to various record sets; these requests are in various stages of settlement. Once obtained, the requested data set is put in digital format and made available on Internet Archive.

The most recent request (#8), the List of Registered Voters in New York City for 1924, was obtained from the New York City Archives in September 2016 and uploaded to Internet Archive. This data set is the list compiled by the New York City Board of Elections of everyone in New York City legally registered to vote in the 1924 election. The record seekers focused on acquiring the 1924 data for several reasons. Voter registration could potentially be higher during a presidential election year. Military personnel who returned after serving abroad during WW I were likely to appear on the list. Women had won the right to vote so female relatives’ names might be found on the 1924 list. In addition, those who had arrived during New York City’s huge wave of immigration at the turn of the century and chose to naturalize would have had time to complete the process and thus be eligible to vote.

Why is this list a useful tool for NYC genealogical research? Until 1957, NYC required voters to complete a registration form each year. (After 1957 voters only had to file a registration form if their address changed.) So if the name of someone you are researching appears on this 1924 list you can send a request for a copy of that person’s full voter registration form to the New York City Municipal Archives (for Manhattan, Queens, and Staten Island/Richmond County) or to the New York City Board of Elections (for the Bronx and Brooklyn). The information on this one page form will provide name of registrant, country or state of birth, race, age, street address, marital status, length of residence in state/county/Assembly District and Election District, whether native born or naturalized, country of nativity, date of naturalization, court where naturalization occurred, and address where last voted. The registration form is an alternative source for finding the court of naturalization when the person cannot be located in a court index.

Reclaim the Records arranged the digital images of the 1924 voter registration list by borough and subdivided them by the Assembly districts in a borough. The links to the data sets for each borough on Internet Archive are:

Bronx: https://www.archive.org/details/votersList1924NYCBronx
Brooklyn: https://www.archive.org/details/votersList1924NYCBrooklyn
Manhattan: https://www.archive.org/details/votersList1924NYCManhattan
Queens: https://archive.org/details/votersList1924NYCQueens
Staten Island: https://www.archive.org/details/votersList1924NYCStatenIsland

For suggestions for searching for names on the list, for detailed instructions on requesting a copy of a NYC voter’s registration form or for information on the Reclaim the Records’ other record requests visit: https://www.reclaimtherecords.org/

Save the Date!

August 10-11, 2018
The Celtic Connections Conference
Boston Marriott Newton
Auburndale, MA

http://www.celtic-connections.org
**Members’ Genealogical Irish Places of Interest**

*On the membership form, TIARA asked members for their genealogical interests to allow members to get in touch with researchers with common areas of interests. This table is the result. If your interests match those of a member, and you would like to contact them, write or email TIARA with the member number of the researcher you would like to contact. TIARA will forward your message.*

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Upcoming Conferences, Workshops and Events

“Children and the Great Hunger” an international conference hosted by Ireland’s Great Hunger Institute and the Irish Heritage Trust
Quinnipiac University, York Hill Campus, 305 Sherman Avenue, Hamden, CT 06514
June 14- June 17, 2017

New England Historic Genealogical Society Webinar “Choosing a DNA Test for Family History Research
Thursday, June 15, 2017 3:00 EDT
Presented by: Christopher C. Child, Senior Genealogist
Free and open to the public but registration required.
https://www.americanancestors.org/education/online-classes

FGS 2017 National Conference “Building Bridges to the Past”
David L. Lawrence Convention Center, Pittsburgh, PA
August 30-September 2, 2017